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New York

President:	Mr. Mahiga	(United Republic of Tanzania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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06-21913 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Guterres: The United Republic of Tanzania has been an extremely generous country, hosting hundreds of thousands refugees for decades. That is remarkable proof of solidarity, for which the world should be grateful. I thank you, Mr. President, for having given me the opportunity to be here today. The Security Council and its resolutions are key instruments to address forced population displacement and its impact on peace and security.

Seven years ago, as Prime Minister of Portugal, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Security Council in advocating for a strong international response to ensure respect for the rights of the East Timorese. Those were the most compelling moments of my political life, and the Council's engagement on that occasion confirmed for me the power of this body as an agent for positive change.

With that in mind, I wish to express the strong support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for resolution 1625 (2005) on strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's role in conflict prevention by addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting development and good governance, eradicating poverty, supporting national reconciliation and protecting human rights.

My Office deals only with the symptoms of a disease; the Security Council may have the power to cure it. That is both a significant ability and a weighty responsibility.

I would like to start by briefing the Council on two urgent challenges that UNHCR faces today: the Sudan and the Great Lakes region, where we are dealing with many of the cross-cutting issues on the Council's agenda.

Sudan-Chad is probably the largest and most complex humanitarian problem on the globe. Six months ago, during my first visit to the region as High Commissioner, the situation appeared to be moving in the right direction. A peace deal had been reached in southern Sudan. It held even after John Garang's death, and had the potential for a positive impact in Darfur and the east. International scrutiny appeared to have a stabilizing effect in the former, with hopes that the Abuja talks would reach a peace agreement before the end of the year. I pay full tribute to the efforts of the African Union, but, unfortunately, we did not have the positive outcome that some may have taken for granted. The situation has taken a turn for the worse, and there is a risk that talks might face an impasse.

Today, violence and impunity, never completely in check, are again everyday occurrences in Darfur. Humanitarian workers are regularly cut off from the displaced and those they are trying to help. This month we were forced to raise the threat level for staff in areas of western Darfur, even as staff observe the systematic destruction of crops and rising gender-based violence.

The insecurity has now spread across the border into Chad. Just a few days ago, armed rebels took several Government officials hostage and attacked the village of Guéréda, where UNHCR cares for over 25,000 Sudanese refugees. The increasingly unstable conditions in the border area, which is home to 200,000 refugees, have compelled us to relocate part of our staff without prejudice to the services for the refugees themselves.

The international community could face a catastrophe in Darfur. Averting it will require bold

measures and the full involvement of the African Union and the United Nations. If we fail, if there is no physical protection for those in need of aid, we risk a much greater calamity than what we have seen so far.

I appeal to this body today in the strongest terms. I am aware of the discussions under way on the evolution of a more robust security force and the delicate question of its nature and composition. But preventing a disastrous human toll in Darfur requires a peace agreement, not as a solution to the problem, but as a start to a complex process of reconciliation. To reach that peace agreement, we need the full commitment of the Council and all its members, working together in support of peace and putting pressure on all the parties involved. Who can defy you if you act together?

To the South, the voluntary repatriation of Sudanese refugees began last month with a first group of returnees from Kenya. Tripartite agreements for repatriation are being signed with the Governments of Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Movements from Ethiopia and Uganda will begin in February and March, and our aim is to return — or help to return — 50,000 Sudanese from refugee camps in neighbouring countries in the coming months. Given the dimensions of the operation, we estimate it will take three to four years to help all refugees return home to South Sudan.

Repatriation is strictly voluntary. But even with the fragile situation in areas of the South, we cannot overlook the courage and determination of the estimated 75,000 refugees who have already come home spontaneously. Tens of thousands of internally displaced persons have also returned to the South, mainly from Khartoum.

International assistance is crucial for the sustainability of returns to the South. When I spoke with Sudanese refugees in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, I saw how much they wanted to go back. I will never forget listening to people of all ages talk about their hopes — for a home of their own, for education, for peace. But in South Sudan there are only 14 kilometres of paved road, almost no schools, almost no hospitals and a civil administration that is extremely thin on the ground. We cannot wait to answer the refugees' wishes to return. Massive economic and political support to the transition is necessary now — not when everything is in place and all the rules of conditionality are met. By then it could be too late.

Eastern Sudan is less noticed by international observers. But its security situation is deteriorating rapidly. A peace agreement is also imperative, even if we know that stability in the region is closely tied to developments in Eritrea and Ethiopia. More than 100,000 Eritreans remain as refugees in Sudan, one of the oldest refugee groups cared for by UNHCR. Tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia last year drove several thousand new Eritrean refugees into Sudan and Ethiopia. Any deterioration in relations between the two countries clearly threatens a sizeable population displacement.

The Great Lakes region features similarly complex challenges for humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR. Two situations the Council is following closely are of particular importance to my Office — Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Last year, 66,000 people went home to Burundi with our help. But the rate of refugee returns has slowed significantly over the past few months, and movement may stop altogether unless every measure is taken to build the confidence of prospective returnees in their reintegration. And let us be honest, those conditions are not present yet. Economic support to Burundi and to the humanitarian agencies is crucial now for security and consolidation of the peace process and success in repatriation.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo finds itself in a similar situation after years of unrest. Repatriation has started and continues from several neighbouring States, particularly Tanzania. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has also been selected as one of three countries to pilot a new, inter-agency cluster approach to internal displacement, through which UNHCR has been asked to assume the lead in the areas of protection and shelter. This will be a pioneering approach in protection, with UNHCR working in close cooperation with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

Stability and international support are paramount to the success of these humanitarian efforts. But just last week, up to 20,000 people, mostly women and children, fled from conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and crossed into Uganda at three border points. Different displacement movements are still

going on in every direction. This scene is the type of recurrent insecurity that has made humanitarian interventions next to impossible. UNHCR has sent relief aid and staff to the border areas — assistance, in fact, that was destined for repatriating Sudanese. The tragic killing of the peacekeepers in Garamba Park by elements of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army is a clear demonstration of the complexity of the problems we face.

As with Sudan, threats to peace and development in the Great Lakes region do not end with a single country, or two, or even three. Security and solutions cannot be parcelled out one nation at a time. Both Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo underline how crucial it is to employ, and for this body to support, a regional approach to peacekeeping and political missions. The Security Council's forthcoming debate on peace and security in the Great Lakes is very timely in this regard. These two situations are also a good reminder of the importance of and the problems associated with the conceptual framework of the responsibility to protect.

The number of refugees worldwide is at its lowest level in almost a quarter of a century. Unfortunately, the same does not apply to internal displacement. Several sizeable repatriation operations have contributed to the decrease in refugees, led by Afghanistan, where more than four million people have returned home since 2002. Returns to African nations, such as Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and countries of the former Yugoslavia have also been or are becoming very successful. Refugees and internally displaced are among the most obvious beneficiaries of the end of conflict. When the gunfire stops and wars fade, millions of them seize the opportunity to begin life over again in their countries of origin.

But that picture is incomplete. What the past decade has demonstrated is that refugees must not be seen as uninvolved beneficiaries of a peace and recovery process, or simply as an afterthought. Refugees return with schooling and new skills, and this in itself is a critical factor in any post-conflict situation. Over and over, we see that their participation is necessary for the consolidation of both peace and post-conflict economic recovery. True, sustainable peace and recovery are necessary to allow refugee returns, but refugee returns are every bit as essential to sustained peace and recovery.

These are also our objectives in other parts of the world, such as in Iraq. UNHCR remains engaged in close coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to find durable solutions through return and reintegration, as soon as conditions permit, for some 1.3 million internally displaced persons in Iraq and another estimated one million Iraqi refugees in the region. Resolving land and property issues is one of the priorities that will help this process. UNHCR hopes, circumstances permitting, to enhance its presence and capacity inside Iraq.

Given the unbroken line from population displacement to peace and recovery, the failure to follow that line steadily from relief to development ranks as one of the international community's most consistent failures. Links between humanitarian aid and development efforts are simply not working in most cases.

Humanitarian aid is not a guarantee against the recurrence of violence or of displacement. The absence of an effective transition from short- to longer-term assistance reduces the life expectancy of solutions. Large-scale population returns are difficult to sustain if development stalls and instability grows. Without adequate resources for development, institution-building and reconciliation, societies can again unravel, dormant conflicts can reignite and civilians can be forcibly displaced once more.

UNHCR is not a development agency and does not intend to become one. But we are raising awareness of the need to include refugees and the displaced in national development programmes, and we will be a reliable partner in the United Nations Development Group. Afghanistan has shown us that there is both the need for and the possibility of engaging in new ways with recovery actors. If we do not work from both sides to forge the links, relief and development will never sustain each other.

That is why from our perspective the decision to create a Peacebuilding Commission was one of the most significant events of 2005. Too little of the international community's attention and resources have traditionally been devoted to rebuilding societies torn apart by war and violence. I look forward to working closely with the Peacebuilding Commission to address not only the relief-to-development gap, but also the complex needs of societies emerging from conflict. UNHCR will appreciate being seen by the future

Commission as a relevant partner. We also intend to play an active part in its Support Office.

This is an appropriate moment to recall the vital role of women in peacebuilding. More than five years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), it is also time to note that we have a long way to go to reach the goal of equal participation by women.

Furthermore, I strongly hope that the Peacebuilding Commission will ensure that recovery processes continue long after the attention of the international media has moved elsewhere. Humanitarian relief and development support must follow the real needs of the people, not the agendas of television networks.

The best remedy is prevention, and vigilance is essential in all parts of the world. UNHCR is closely watching developments in the Central African Republic, where the spread of armed gangs and general lawlessness in the north have forced thousands of people to flee to Chad and Cameroon. There is still time to act and, with limited resources, to prevent another major crisis in the near future.

Prevention is not an easy job; the situation in Côte d'Ivoire proves that. The outrageous attacks on United Nations offices in Guiglo are a clear demonstration of the crucial need to find an effective solution to the four-year-old crisis. The population displacement that would result from open conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is unpredictable in scale and impact.

The Security Council's actions related to the protection of civilians and of displaced persons in particular are of great importance to our Office. The mandates of peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding strategies must include solutions for displaced populations. The safety of humanitarian workers must be ensured too. I take this opportunity to welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the Optional Protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

As a protection agency, we face two major challenges today: preserving asylum in an age of mixed population flows, and stopping the rise of intolerance in modern societies.

The reasons for many migratory movements are complex but can be dramatic, like the serious socio-economic decline in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, which leaves no other alternative for survival. Preserving asylum requires that we be able to find those in genuine need of protection when they are concealed by mixed flows. The challenge of identifying such individuals grows along with their numbers and the risks they are willing to take, as we have seen in the Mediterranean and, tragically, again last weekend and even yesterday in the Gulf of Aden.

Credible protection must incorporate measures against fraud and abuse to safeguard the credibility of the asylum system. UNHCR stands ready to work with all Governments to support their efforts to improve legislation and asylum procedures. I appeal strongly for a concerted crackdown on human trafficking and smuggling. Protecting refugees requires tough punishment for those who profit from these irregular movements.

UNHCR fully recognizes the right of countries to responsibly manage their borders and define their migration policies. But it is essential that such measures do not preclude the right of those in need of international protection to physical access to asylum procedures and adequate refugee status determination, in accordance with international law.

Addressing intolerance is perhaps an even greater challenge. Intolerance is the rejection of strangers, of people from elsewhere, of those who are different. Intolerance is fostered by populism, both in politics and in the media. As a result, the public is often led to view terrorism, security problems and asylum and migration issues as shades of the same motif.

Terrorism must be fought with total determination. We need to make certain that terrorists are not granted asylum. But we need to make just as certain that asking for asylum in itself is not a crime.

Racism, xenophobia, ethnic conflict, violent nationalism and religious fundamentalism are unfortunately still very much alive and are serious threats both to social cohesion in societies and to peace and security throughout the world. Preserving peace and security means fighting the ills rooted in populism and intolerance. I appeal to all members to join together in confronting them.

The President: I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

As there is no list of speakers, I invite Council members who wish to make comments or address

questions to the High Commissioner to so indicate to the Secretariat as from now.

I shall now give the floor to those who have indicated their wish to speak.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): As I am the first speaker, I would like to make some general comments before posing some questions to the High Commissioner for Refugees.

I believe that we were all extremely interested in Mr. Guterres's briefing. We very much welcome his contribution for at least two reasons. First, we are very well aware of the crucial importance of the High Commissioner for Refugees. We know perfectly well that we all have a duty, an obligation, to assist the High Commissioner and, more generally, a duty towards displaced persons throughout the world.

Secondly, as the Security Council, we must have a strategic vision of crises in the world. I believe that the parameters for refugees and displaced persons are very important. In that regard, Mr. Guterres's briefing supplements the briefing by Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

I often say that if we are to carry out our work in a serious manner, we must be mindful of several geopolitical world maps. Of course, we need a map of the relationship of forces and a crisis map, but experience has taught us that maps relating to the protection of populations and to the situation of refugees and displaced persons provide us with crucial information giving us an accurate picture of the situation to help us in our work.

In addition to those general comments, I should like now to address the heart of the matter and some of Mr. Guterres' points.

First, with respect to the Sudan and Chad, I believe that Mr. Guterres' analysis was interesting and troubling. I should like to refer to a specific case. With regard to the refugee camps in Chad, where we are largely responsible for security, we are seeing growing tensions between the camps and the local populations. I would ask the High Commissioner if he has specific solutions already being implemented or under consideration to address that problem.

Secondly, with respect to the Sudan, Mr. Guterres mentioned the return of a large number of refugees, thanks inter alia to the agreement concluded between the Sudan, Kenya and UNHCR. Is he contemplating other agreements of that type with other neighbours of the Sudan?

My third and fourth questions are more structural in nature. The High Commissioner spoke of the problem of refugees and the role played by UNHCR in rebuilding countries in crisis. He referred, inter alia, to the relationship between UNHCR and the Peacebuilding Commission. In that context, it is very important to develop links between UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and others. Does Mr. Guterres believe that such cooperation is sufficiently developed and that there are prospects for such development, particularly in the context of what we hope will be the increasing powers enjoyed by the Peacebuilding Commission?

Finally, I wish to ask about the link between UNHCR and peacekeeping operations. We note a major agreement between UNHCR and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with respect to the UNHCR mission to that country, referred to by Mr. Guterres. I would imagine that, as often happens in humanitarian affairs, one ought to be cautious in structuring the relationship between military activities and humanitarian assistance. Does Mr. Guterres believe that there is a role for similar forms of cooperation between UNHCR and United Nations peacekeeping operations?

I am sorry to have spoken at such length, but the subject is so fascinating that I should have wished to ask far more questions.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): My delegation is most grateful to Mr. Guterres for his presence today and also for his thoughtful and powerful statement. I should like to acknowledge in particular his comments at the end about the importance of values as we tackle the challenge of refugee flows and migration.

I want to use the opportunity of this discussion with Mr. Guterres to signal the value we in the United Kingdom attach to the important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in providing refugee protection and in promoting durable solutions. I would also use the occasion to record once more the United Kingdom's recognition of the importance of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967

Protocol, as well as the need for States to comply fully with the provisions contained therein.

I want to thank Mr. Guterres for the active leadership that he has shown on behalf of UNHCR in taking a key role in protection and support for internally displaced persons, which is now being addressed through the collaborative approach and the cluster system. It would be interesting to hear his thoughts on how well that is working so far.

The linkages between flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, on the one hand, and peace and security, on the other, are clear and of direct concern to the work of this Council. Mr. Guterres made that point very well this morning, I think. It underlines our own view about the Council's interests. That extends not just to the country-specific situations that the Council finds itself addressing, but also to our work both on conflict management and on conflict prevention. I should like to make just one or two remarks and ask one or two questions in those two categories.

First, on post-conflict management, I want to underline our welcome of Mr. Guterres' undertaking that UNHCR will play an active role in the Support Office of the Peacebuilding Commission and in the Commission itself.

Secondly, we very much welcome the work that UNHCR is doing to ensure that refugees and displaced persons are incorporated into recovery strategies. Mr. Guterres is absolutely right, in our view, that returns of internally displaced persons and refugees are integral to the solution, as well as being part of the problem. That perception and Mr. Guterres' support will help us, I think, as we look at peacekeeping missions and the increasing role that they are playing in facilitating refugee returns. My point, really, is in the same area as my French colleague's question just now.

I, too, want to ask whether there are any lessons that we can learn from UNHCR's experiences in ensuring the safety and the sustainability of refugee returns. I would sharpen that question by focusing particularly on Mr. Guterres' remarks about the challenges in Darfur and Chad — an issue which we are, of course, addressing and will have to continue to address, and on which his points only add to our sense of urgency about the situation.

One issue in the context of post-conflict management that I want to raise — and that I am not sure Mr. Guterres touched on greatly but would welcome his thoughts on — is the fundamental importance we attach to maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps and settlements. As we see it, the presence of armed elements in such camps, especially where they themselves are seeking sanctuary in a neighbouring country, poses a number of grave consequences for the security and welfare of refugees, including, of course, the potential for sexual abuse and for forced recruitment. Those factors create an unstable and insecure operating environment for humanitarian workers and give rise to security concerns for host communities and receiving States. There is thus an impact on regional peace and security.

Turning to conflict prevention, I want very much to welcome Mr. Guterres's reference to resolution 1625 (2005). We believe that UNHCR has an important role to play in the area of early warning and in helping both to signal and to address root causes of conflict, especially where these trigger displacement. I think that we, as a Council, are going to have to take note carefully of his remarks both about eastern Sudan and about the Central African Republic. I should like here to signal my delegation's appreciation for his having raised those issues.

Mr. Guterres also spoke about the regional dynamics, something to which I think the Council is paying increasing attention, but which poses challenges both for us as a Council and for UNHCR in this sort of warning role.

I wanted to conclude by asking whether UNHCR believes that it has sufficient capacity to do the sort of monitoring that Mr. Guterres's comments must have been based on, and what systems are in place to ensure that its efforts in this area are coordinated with those of other relevant actors in the United Nations and outside it, and not just dependent on the occasional appearance before the Security Council.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): It gives me great pleasure to welcome the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, who has been on the job a few months now. I wish to thank him for his very informative and comprehensive briefing on the important issue of refugees and internally displaced persons. As we all know, the Security Council is

paying particular attention to these issues, which form part of all the crises that we have on our agenda.

We all are committed to the need for the survival and absolute protection of refugees from attacks, forced recruitment and sexual violence, especially against women and children. We support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and deeply respect the dedication of its staff, many of whom have even sacrificed their lives while carrying out their tasks in perilous circumstances.

Armed conflicts in general result in the creation of large numbers of refugees seeking asylum in other countries, mainly neighbouring ones. We have seen this scenario of human suffering play out again and again throughout the world.

Africa has a considerable share of conflicts, tensions and victims. The Sudan is the most recent example, with more than 200,000 people fleeing the country and almost 2 million internally displaced persons in Darfur. UNHCR's assistance is vital because it is lifesaving.

In that respect, my question to the High Commissioner is whether we in the United Nations system have the potential to devise and implement a mechanism for responding to crises as they emerge in order to dispatch immediately available humanitarian aid to the population under threat.

I have another question regarding protracted refugee situations. Can he tell us to what extent intensifying cooperation between UNHCR and regional organizations such as the African Union, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has given, or could give, new impetus to the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees?

Another significant issue is how we identify and deal with actual refugees seeking asylum. Greece is very much interested and involved in this area, because every year we receive a large number of illegal immigrants and refugees. The truth is that we live in a changing, challenging and complex world. In our national capacity, we have to protect our borders and security, in particular against the threat of terrorism, while ensuring that we provide asylum protection to those who are entitled to it under international law.

In that framework, and as a European Union member State, Greece looks forward to the establishment of a common European asylum system by 2010, as set out in The Hague programme.

On the other hand, we are encouraged by recent positive indications of a decrease in the total number of refugees in past years and of an increase in the number of voluntary repatriations, especially in Afghanistan, Liberia, Rwanda and southern Sudan. We, too, believe that repatriation is the best solution, but only when linked to an environment of stability, security, reconstruction and development. We hope that the newly established Peacebuilding Commission will provide a unique opportunity to ensure, along with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the protection of refugees and their reintegration into post-conflict societies.

Refugees' humanitarian needs cover the whole spectrum of protecting the essence of human life — the dignity and human rights of every person.

In closing, I should like, therefore, to commend once again the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Mr. Guterres personally for their tremendous work, which benefits millions of people.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, at the outset let me thank you for having convened this informative open meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres. We would like to thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing on the situation of world refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. I would like also to express the appreciation of the Government of Argentina for the important work undertaken daily by his organization and by Mr. Guterres himself, for we believe that in order to carry out the functions he is charged with, one must have in-depth knowledge of international realities as well as a clear militant spirit in favour of those who have no voice.

Recent reports indicate that there is reason for hope as concerns some conflicts. Indeed, we have heard from Mr. Guterres that the current number of refugees is the lowest in the last 25 years and that in some conflicts, in particular in Africa, the situation seems to have improved.

However, conflicts and human rights violations continue to prevail that trigger the displacement of many persons in other areas.

We are concerned by the issue of internal displacements due to conflicts, and we believe that it should receive appropriate attention from the Council, given that refugees and internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable in the context of armed conflict, as the Council has said in the past.

The recent debate held by the Council on 9 December on the protection of civilians in armed conflict eloquently underlined the difficult situation of displaced persons in many of those conflicts.

From that perspective, there are certainly important areas of common concern for the Office of the High Commissioner and for the Council. The mandates contained in thematic and country-specific Council resolutions in areas such as access of humanitarian personnel to populations in need; safety and security of humanitarian personnel; the situation of children and women in armed conflict; and the protection of civilians are particularly relevant to the work of the Office of the High Commissioner and can have a significant impact on that Office's protection mandate.

We believe that the interaction between those various dimensions should be taken into account, especially in the design, deployment and functioning of integrated missions.

It is important that there be clear mandates concerning the protection of camps for displaced persons and that these be included in the establishment or renewal of peacekeeping missions.

Reports of the use of rape against refugees as a weapon of conflict and the abduction and humiliation of refugee children continue to be routine features of displacement situations. The violation of the human rights of displaced persons is especially relevant in the context of the Council's mandate when it comes to assessing situations in which civilians are attacked or in which humanitarian assistance to them is deliberately obstructed. Special attention should be paid to situations constituting war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes with regard to which the Council has been given the responsibility to protect.

We have already expressed our hopes with regard to reports about the return of many refugees to their countries of origin, especially in Africa. The contexts in which those returns are taking place are very diverse. They include a variety of factors — including security considerations — that positively or negatively affect the sustainability of those returns. Although some of those factors fall within competence of the Council, it is clear that the broad involvement of the various bodies of the Organization, including the recently established Peacebuilding Commission, is truly crucial.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his briefing, which provided a valuable update on the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the conflict areas of the Sudan and the Great Lakes region.

We very much appreciate the relentless efforts of UNHCR staff and missions in providing protection and assistance to the 19.2 million refugees and internally displaced persons around the world. In that context, we support UNHCR's global strategic objectives as formulated in its ninth global appeal, with special emphasis on enhancing the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the agency's operations by institutionalizing results-based management.

Strengthening the international community's overall capacity to protect civilians affected by armed conflict is one of my Government's priorities. In that context, we commend the efforts of UNHCR to address one of the biggest challenges of the current refugee regime: the problem of people internally displaced by conflict. We agree with Mr. Guterres's past statement that the treatment of people internally displaced by conflict has been one of the biggest failures of the international community in the past. In that connection, we welcome the strengthening of UNHCR's support for collaborative efforts to comprehensively address situations of internal displacement, which is defined as one of UNHCR's global strategic objectives. We would like to hear Mr. Guterres's views about the progress and challenges in that area.

We highly commend UNHCR for its remarkable success in helping more than 4 million refugees in Afghanistan to return to their homes. We also welcome the information provided by Mr. Guterres regarding the

progress made in the repatriation of 66,000 refugees to Burundi last year; more than 38,000 Liberians have also been repatriated. This has been made possible by the improved security situation in those countries. In that connection, we share Mr. Guterres's belief that UNHCR should become an important partner and participant in the future activities of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peace Support Office. We believe that the Commission will provide us with an effective tool for securing post-conflict stability and development. We also believe that UNHCR can contribute to its work by virtue of its unique potential and the experience it has gathered in areas of conflict over the years.

In conclusion, I would like to ask Mr. Guterres a question concerning recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the safety of refugee returns to that country from neighbouring countries, especially Uganda. According to the latest news, having fled fighting in the Kivu region of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congolese refugees in Uganda have begun to return home in recent days. As we have heard, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is very volatile, with military activity having resumed in that country in recent days. We have also heard that 15,000 refugees are living in the open at the airfield in Kisoro, waiting for the situation to improve. Can the High Commissioner provide us with some details about the current situation of Congolese refugees on the Ugandan border, as well as about the possible actions of UNHCR to assist that group of refugees, who are eager to return home but who are trapped at the border? We have heard that, according to current UNHCR practices, the agency can only provide water for refugees who are in the border area, and nothing more. We wonder whether that practice can somehow be changed in the future.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): First, we welcome High Commissioner António Guterres to the Security Council. We would like to express our great appreciation for his insightful presentation on the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and on its link to the work of the Security Council.

The decreasing trend in the overall number of refugees worldwide is itself a most welcome development. But, at the same time, we remain deeply concerned that, in a number of refugee situations, particularly in Africa, heavy refugee case loads persist, with millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) continuing to suffer due to protracted conflict, without prospects for a better future. In those situations the United Nations and the international community must ensure that adequate life-saving assistance and protection are provided for them and that the security of people in refugee camps is ensured. In that connection, I commend UNHCR for its dedication and hard work.

In order to provide such assistance and security, practical cooperation on the ground between refugee agencies, other humanitarian actors, peacekeeping operations and troops from regional organizations where such forces are deployed is sometimes critically important. In that connection, I have a question to ask of the High Commissioner. In UNHCR's recent experience on the ground, has the agency encountered difficulties in that regard? How does the High Commissioner for Refugees assess the level and quality of cooperation between humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR and military actors on the ground: the peacekeepers involved?

Secondly, assisting communities hosting large numbers of refugees should not be forgotten. The High Commissioner made a reference to Tanzania's laudable efforts in that regard. Local communities in Chad bear a considerable burden as a result of having received many refugees from the Darfur region. There are many other similar examples. The international community should assist refugee-hosting communities, in the spirit of burden-sharing, in order that the flow of refugees does not lead to the destabilization of a region. In that regard, it is important to recall that the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing was reaffirmed in the outcome document of the September summit (General Assembly resolution 60/1). The donor community must renew its resolve to support nations in assisting refugee populations and their host communities.

Whenever the prerequisites for the return of refugees are met, it is important to ensure the sustainable voluntary return and integration of refugees and the resumption of normal life. This year we expect that a large number of refugees are likely to return, especially in southern Sudan. The international community should assist with a seamless transition from emergency relief to reconstruction in the Sudan and elsewhere.

In that connection, the High Commissioner emphasized the importance of the link between refugee returns and sustainability. We agree. In his statement this morning, the High Commissioner said that

> "refugees must not be seen as uninvolved beneficiaries of a peace and recovery process, or simply as an afterthought. Refugees return with schooling and new skills, and this in itself is a critical factor in any post-conflict situation". (*Supra*)

In that regard, we have argued that the notion of human security should play an important role. Under the concept of human security, refugees are not and should not be regarded as a burden on the communities to which they return, but should be seen as potential contributors to enhancing the welfare of the communities they belong to. Based on that idea, Japan has taken the initiative on the sustainable return of refugees in Afghanistan and elsewhere. We also expect the newly established Peacebuilding Commission to make a contribution to that end.

While there has been a global decline in refugee populations, the number of internally displaced persons continues to rise, reaching more than twice the number of refugees. The plight of IDPs, as observed in many parts of the world, including in northern Uganda, is disturbing. It is nonetheless a welcome development that the September 2005 summit outcome document (General Assembly resolution 60/1) recognized the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as an important international framework. The United Nations needs to strengthen its capacity to protect and assist IDPs as a priority on its humanitarian agenda. We therefore follow with interest the ongoing discussion in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on this matter, including the cluster approach. We hope that interested States will engage in active debate to that end.

In Geneva, Ambassador Fujisaki of Japan now chairs the UNHCR Executive Committee. Let me express our expectation that the close cooperation between the Executive Committee and High Commissioner Guterres will lead to even more effective implementation of the UNHCR mandate.

I wish to conclude by expressing to Mr. Guterres Japan's great respect for his leadership. We wish him well. I wish also to congratulate Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins on her appointment as Assistant High Commissioner and to wish her much good luck.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I too would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Guterres, for his comprehensive and very informative report to the Council on the effects which a number of conflicts on the Council's agenda have on refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in conflict zones.

Without spending too much time on each of the conflicts mentioned, I wish to offer a few comments and pose a few questions which address some points of importance for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) vis-à-vis the protection of refugees and IDPs.

First, let me offer a few thoughts on UNHCR's role in the United Nations reform process. Denmark supports the ongoing humanitarian reform process aimed at improving the capacity and preparedness of the humanitarian system. In particular, IDPs, as the largest vulnerable group globally, must be better protected. That point, unfortunately, is being underlined every day by the ongoing events in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda, et cetera. For that reason, Denmark welcomes the decision of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to implement a cluster approach, and we compliment UNHCR for taking on some major tasks in that regard. However, the financial implications of the new cluster approach to IDP situations still seem uncertain.

Denmark has taken note of UNHCR's appeal to donors to rapidly provide contributions to start IDP interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Uganda. We fully recognize this and will be considering additional funding. Furthermore, we understand that UNHCR currently faces financial difficulties because it cannot get up-front money from the Central Emergency Response Fund before the Fund is operational, which will occur by mid-March.

How does the High Commissioner assess the prospects for the financing of his additional activities?

Secondly, on the issue of peacebuilding, refugees and IDPs are victims of conflict, and their safe return must be a priority in post-conflict peacebuilding. The Security Council, for instance, has a specific responsibility to include protection of civilians in the mandates of its missions. However, to find a sustainable solution, all relevant actors must be involved. Denmark thus fully agrees with UNHCR that durable solutions for displaced populations must be

integrated into the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, once their work commences.

We regard UNHCR's partnership with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to create better conditions for the safe return of displaced populations in integrated peacekeeping missions as an important step towards more sustainable peacebuilding. However, we have also noted that on earlier occasions the High Commissioner has stated that many of the voluntary repatriations that UNHCR is carrying out today may not be durable.

How do we ensure more durable activities?

Thirdly, on the Convention Plus project, Denmark has been a strong supporter of bringing about durable solutions for refugees through Convention Plus. We see Convention Plus as a major instrument in ensuring the transition from relief to development assistance. It is, however, also important that more donors commit themselves to support Convention Plus projects in the field. We count on UNHCR to continue its advocacy role vis-à-vis donors. It is, in that regard, a very positive development that UNHCR has started collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a Framework for Durable Solutions in Africa.

How does the High Commissioner assess progress in getting other development agencies involved?

Fourthly, on the transition from relief to development assistance, the early recovery cluster, under UNDP lead, will play a key role in building a bridge between relief and development. The early recovery cluster should also help UNHCR to deliver durable solutions and protection in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. United Nations organizations with a longer-term development mandate must take over from UNHCR. We need to ensure that return of refugees and IDPs is made sustainable. The Sudan, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are examples of where we rapidly need to see a stronger presence of development agencies in the field.

Let me, in that regard, mention that UNHCR is a key partner in the Danish Regions of Origin initiative, which supports a number of UNHCR programmes to improve protection and ensure durable solutions. We regard the Regions of Origin initiative as a key instrument in tackling some of the transition issues arising from repatriation and in reintegrating refugees and IDPs. The experience gained from Danish support to the transition programme in Sri Lanka has revealed difficulties experienced by United Nations agencies in working on transition in an integrated manner.

I would therefore like, in conclusion, to encourage UNHCR and other United Nations agencies to improve the coordination of their activities in the field.

Mr. Okio (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this open briefing on a topic that particularly affects Africa, our continent. I would also like to thank Mr. Guterres, the High Commissioner for Refugees, for his briefing, which made very clear the importance that he attaches to the issue of refugees and displaced persons in Africa — an issue that he highlighted when he took up his duties.

We are aware of the magnitude of the task and the difficulties involved in such a delicate and complex area, which includes humanitarian assistance and the return of refugees and displaced persons. His efforts thus far are commendable; his first working visit to the Great Lakes region is a case in point.

Despite some progress that has been made here and there, the overall situation for refugees remains troubling and is not improving in any significant way, which can only be a cause for concern for my delegation. That is why my delegation would like to ask that particular attention be focused on what Mr. Guterres described as emergency situations — the Sudan and the Great Lakes region, where every day violence coexists with impunity. In that context, we support his appeal with respect to bringing international pressure to bear on the various actors involved, which could help us to reverse the current negative trends.

We welcome the efforts made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with regard to refugee return in certain countries, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia, and we encourage the consolidation of processes under way in those countries — in particular in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the situation is very unstable. We also know that particular attention needs to given to the situation of persons returning to their countries so as to

facilitate their integration into everyday life. We must provide the optimal conditions for such returns, and in that respect we call for donor support for the important activities being carried out by UNHCR.

In his briefing, Mr. Guterres also highlighted security problems, including those affecting humanitarian workers, and we would like to express our concern in that regard. We know — and this has been mentioned by previous speakers — that the problem of refugees and displaced persons often originates in the recurrent conflicts in Africa. Resolution 1625 (2005) is quite eloquent on that subject. My delegation would therefore like to stress that, while we need to deal with the problem of displaced persons and refugees, special attention should be given to the causes of conflict in Africa.

We would like to ask Mr. Guterres a few questions for the purpose of clarification. The first is simply a request for information. We would like to know where we stand with regard to the "Convention Plus" initiative, which has been the subject of many discussions in recent years, in Geneva in particular. He also raised the issue of the sustainable settlement of refugees within the host countries and the possibility of their participating in development activities. My delegation would like to know something more about his expectations are in that regard.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation supports the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as the lead international agency providing international protection to refugees.

We believe that this meeting of the Security Council, initiated by the Tanzanian presidency, is extremely important. That is borne out by the comments of Mr. Guterres, to whom we are grateful for his comprehensive briefing. The information that he gave us and the figures that he cited were truly enlightening.

The High Commissioner gave us a far-from-exhaustive list of countries in which hundreds of thousands — indeed, millions — of people have been compelled to flee their homes, seeking asylum and protection in areas of their own country that are not always safe, or in neighbouring States. That massive displacement of people is, of course, having a very negative impact on the economies of the recipient countries, and often becomes a dangerous element of destabilization in the domestic political life of such countries.

Banditry, looting, murder and rape are characteristic of virtually all conflict areas, particularly those where illegal armed groups are active. We are all well aware of the criminal activities of such groups of thugs. In those situations, it is becoming increasingly important, especially in Africa, to coordinate the activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations, within the context of their mandates as endorsed by the Security Council, with the country presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR can identify the most vulnerable segments of the population, including refugees, and give them the assistance and protection that they need. We believe that a good example of such coordinated work is that of the African Union mission in the Sudan, where, despite all of the complexities and problems, with which we are all familiar, it has been possible to reduce the level of violence against refugees and internally displaced persons in the areas in which they are concentrated in Darfur.

The Russian Federation supports the initiatives of the top management of UNHCR, which is seeking to enhance the effectiveness of the organization, and we favour the retention of the existing principles for the voluntary funding of its programmes. In 2005, Russia made a further voluntary contribution to the budget of UNHCR, and we hope in the future to continue that practice. If possible, we will try to expand our participation in international humanitarian activities.

Mr. Tachie-Menson (Ghana): I should like first of all to thank the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, for his comprehensive briefing.

The achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in December 1950, are unequalled. It is, without doubt, the biggest and most effective humanitarian agency in the world. Working with countless agencies and non-governmental organizations, it has given hope to millions of vulnerable people displaced by war, famine and natural disasters. Today, 19.2 million people receive assistance from that Office. The number of vulnerable people in need of assistance, and the list of areas needing humanitarian relief, are almost endless. These include the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kosovo and Afghanistan, to mention only a few.

The question now is how well placed UNHCR is to handle these new challenges. UNHCR's core mandate is to lead and coordinate action, to protect refugees and to resolve refugee problems worldwide. Two main objectives can be distilled from this core mandate: to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and to ensure that everyone has the right to seek asylum and find safe haven in another State.

At the heart of this mandate is the following issue: Who is a refugee? The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol define a refugee as a person who is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or unwilling to return to it, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion. That definition is the basis of international refugee law.

In this era, one in which conflicts can cause massive refugee flows that overwhelm the facilities of host countries, the tolerance level is very low. Illegal migration is another complicating factor. There is, therefore, a tendency on the part of some Governments overburdened with the reality of illegal migration to consider refugee issues in the same light. The challenge for UNHCR is to seek the cooperation of Member countries in ensuring recognition of the fact that the problem of refugees is a distinct human rights issue, and not one of migration.

The abuse of refugee status by some illegal aliens does more than just raise the question of the denial of this most basic right — recognized under international humanitarian law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — to vulnerable groups. UNHCR has to work with States to combat the gradual erosion of refugee rights under the guise of law enforcement and anti-illegal-immigration measures. It is also important that Member States live up to their obligations and commitments under the 1951 Convention on Refugees.

Mr. Brencick (United States of America): My delegation too would like to thank High Commissioner Guterres for his incisive and forceful briefing this morning. We believe that he is off to a very strong start in his very challenging position; rather than add to those challenges by lengthening the daunting list of good questions already posed by my colleagues, I will confine myself to a few remarks.

The United States is a strong supporter of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the multilateral approach to serving refugees. We rely heavily on UNHCR to ensure that the protection and assistance needs of refugees are met, in coordination with other United Nations, international and non-governmental organization partners in the field. For that reason, we plan to continue our generous financial support for the work of UNHCR.

As other Council members have noted, we are following closely the efforts to reinvigorate the collaborative approach of the United Nations to meeting the needs of internally displaced persons through the designation of agencies as cluster leads for various sectors. Such reform is long overdue. I would like to note, however, our concern that UNHCR work to ensure that its involvement with internally displaced persons not detract in any way from its mission to assist refugees.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Office of the High Commissioner in order to improve the United Nations response to humanitarian crises, including greater accountability in its work.

Mr. Gallardo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for his important briefing. The problem of refugees and displaced persons is one of the most complicated matters currently facing the international community. Peru is grateful to him for the work he is doing to protect refugees and displaced persons throughout the world, as well as for his ongoing search for solutions to problems they face. Peru would also like to point out its profound respect for humanitarian workers who have been injured or killed while carrying out their duties.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) still has very challenging tasks ahead of it. It must face numerous prolonged refugee situations, which have increased in number due to new emergencies that have arisen in various parts of the world. It must face ever-growing signs of intolerance and mistrust in our societies, as a result of which the status of asylum is losing ground. It must deal with migration flows, and must continue to manage various humanitarian crises, such as the situation in Darfur.

Against this backdrop, Peru encourages UNHCR to continue to find imaginative ways to ensure a life with dignity for all the refugees and displaced persons in the world. We support UNHCR's cooperation with other United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and Governments. We welcome the recent agreement signed between the UNHCR and the Governments of the Sudan and Kenya to facilitate the repatriation of more than 70,000 Sudanese in the first quarter of this year. We understand that the repatriation operation will be based on voluntary returns, and that this is the first of seven agreements that in the coming months UNHCR will negotiate to the same end with the countries neighbouring the Sudan.

We can conclude that the refugee situation has changed and has become an example of interdependence. This situation shows how the problems of one country can have immediate consequences for other countries. It also exemplifies the interdependence between refugee problems and human rights questions. Human rights violations are not only one of the main causes of massive exodus; they also rule out the option of voluntary repatriation as long as the violations continue. Another phenomenon that has been on the rise in recent years is that of internally displaced persons: people who have been forced to flee their homes but who remain on the territory of their own country, thereby excluding them from the refugee protection system.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

I thank Mr. António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his very elaborate and informative presentation on the commendable work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in protecting and assisting refugees around the world. I also wish to recognize the presence of Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins and congratulate her on her recent appointment as Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees.

We have received, hosted and protected refugees from neighbouring countries in the Great Lakes region and southern Africa continuously for the past 45 years. Tanzania has been working with UNHCR since 1964. Currently, there are a total of 532,240 refugees — mainly from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia — in the United Republic of Tanzania. This is still the highest number in Africa, despite the limited voluntary repatriation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi that has started.

Tanzania grants asylum as a humanitarian imperative to our neighbours and as an international obligation. We have learned the importance of tolerance and compassion for strangers and those in distress. At the same time, as a host country, we have experienced the challenges of mixed flows and the need to separate genuine asylum-seekers from those with ulterior motives, such as criminals, and those misusing the asylum channel for social and economic reasons. In a region of growing demographic pressures, this can be a very complicated exercise.

For us as a host country, areas of concern on refugee issues include dwindling levels of assistance to refugees, pressure on the environment and infrastructure in the refugee hosting areas, the deterioration of public safety and security due to arms and light weapons carried by some refugees, inadequate funding for UNHCR repatriation operations and poor receiving capacity for returnees in countries of return, which are impeding voluntary repatriation.

In our region, where we have witnessed a genocide in Rwanda, we need to embrace the concept of the responsibility to protect civilian populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We also reiterate the need to strengthen the protection of humanitarian workers in zones of conflict.

The refugee problem can be eased and effectively resolved by addressing its root causes, in order to prevent conflicts, including by heeding early warning signals, such as those given by UNHCR in eastern Sudan. The resolution of residual conflicts in our region — including through the Great Lakes process — by the countries of the region should be encouraged and supported in the context of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005). We must rise up to address the unfolding crisis in Darfur. We commend the work done there by humanitarian agencies, such as UNHCR, but humanitarian action has to be accompanied by sustained and coordinated political and security-related actions carried out by the Council in partnership with the African Union.

I recall that UNHCR was one of the agencies that pioneered, and advocated the need for, a seamless transition from relief to development in post-conflict situations. The recently established Peacebuilding Commission, therefore, is a much-needed institution for the consolidation of peace and security for countries emerging from conflict in our Great Lakes region. It is our hope that it will be adequately resourced to fill the development gap in post-conflict countries and to stabilize nascent Governments and shattered societies.

We wish to reaffirm the commitment made by our leaders at the summit last September to safeguard the principle of refugee protection. We urge shared responsibility in protecting refugees and in finding durable solutions to the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons, and we endorse the idea of burden-sharing with host countries. We concur fully with the observations made by the representative of Japan.

Finally, like our Danish colleague, we would like to know the status of UNHCR's funding for its programmes for refugees, especially in the light of the newly acquired responsibility of the cluster approach to responding to situations involving internally displaced persons. We would also like to hear about the constraints faced in meeting the requirements of returnees, specifically in countries such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Guterres: I thank all members of the Council for their excellent interventions and for the very relevant questions that were raised here today.

(spoke in French)

I would like to begin by thanking the representative of France for his observations and by trying to respond briefly to his questions.

First, it is true that in Chad, because of the extreme shortage of natural resources, particularly water and wood, there is an inevitable tension between the local population, which is very poor, and the very numerous — more than 200,000 — refugees who are sharing the same resources, which are very, very limited.

In that regard, we have had two types of initiatives. First, we have created joint population-refugee commissions to try to manage conflicts, difficulties and problems and address them together. Secondly, we have taken a number of initiatives to lessen the impact of refugee camps on the natural resources involved — particularly water, through new uses, and wood, by introducing techniques that enable us to substantially reduce the quantities of wood necessary, inter alia, to prepare food for refugees, with a view to preservation.

Tripartite agreements are now being negotiated with all the neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, we began too late, because it was very difficult to decide who could sign on the Sudanese side: the Khartoum Government or the regional government of the south. We unfortunately lost months, which also shows the difficulty and complexity of finally finding a solution to the Sudanese problem — a solution that is now enabling us to establish these agreements.

Recently, together with the United Nations Development Programme, we developed a new cooperation framework that we will try to build on the ground, including by planning joint activities aimed at sustainable solutions in Africa. But I must say in all sincerity that the problem of the gap between humanitarian assistance activities and development assistance activities will not be easily brigaded through inter-agency cooperation alone: it is a major issue for the international community. Countries themselves must display leadership and show the will to contribute decisively to resolving the problem.

Indeed, when we look at the various actors on the humanitarian and development sides, we see that they have different cultures and different time scales, and that they encounter extreme difficulties working together on joint programmes to address problems that are, in my view, joint problems. That is a key issue that must prompt all of us to become involved.

Sometimes, even in a country such as mine, international activities have been shared between sectors dealing with humanitarian issues and sectors concerned with development issues, and the internal dialogue has not worked. That dilemma — which I myself have seen in my national administration — exists everywhere. It is a key issue, and I believe that

for all of us, resolving that key issue is an essential condition for success, particularly when it comes to preserving the peace after conflicts have been resolved and ensuring support for refugee return operations.

The representative of France raised a central issue: the relationship between humanitarian agencies and peacekeeping operations. That is an issue that we have never hesitated to address. We recognize the need to preserve the civilian character of humanitarian action, but we have always engaged in very significant and strong cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and we are prepared to cooperate with peacekeeping forces in keeping with the autonomy of our mandate. But we understand that, without a minimum of guaranteed security in the regions, it is absolutely impossible to have effective humanitarian action. What is happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a good example of a more systematic approach to such cooperation in the area of protection. We expect good results in keeping with the basic principles of humanitarian action.

(*spoke in English*)

I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his comments. His first question was about the cluster approach and the first results of its implementation. I think it is fair to say that it is a new approach; it needs a lot of flexibility in order to be successful. It must not be transformed into a cumbersome and bureaucratic approach; it needs a lot of flexibility and must be effective on the ground as quickly as possible. That is our main concern.

I believe that very relevant work was done at the headquarters level in the various agencies to establish an overall framework for the various clusters. But it is on the ground that we now face difficulties. Just one example is camp management in Pakistan. Although our cluster is not supposed to deal with natural disasters, it would be inconceivable for us not to be involved in Pakistan, given the more than 3 million refugees hosted by that country.

Now, there is a cluster for camp management and a cluster for water and sanitation. If there is a water problem in a camp, who is responsible? Who is the provider of last resort? Only by confronting that approach with the reality in the field will we be able to solve the problems and to find the adequate mechanisms to address them without bureaucracy in a simplified way and with a basic concept. Action should be conducted, in each situation, by those who have the capacity to do so. That, I think, is the crucial element for making the cluster approach work. If we stick to a rigid framework even when it does not fit reality, of course we will fail. That, I think, is the lesson we should draw from the early stages of the Pakistan operation, and I do believe that we have learned the lesson and are going to improve our capacity to make it work.

The representative of the United Kingdom raised a lot of very relevant considerations about prevention and conflict resolution. Of course, his intervention was to a large extent centred on Darfur and Chad. I would like to stress again that, in our opinion, the Sudan/Chad problem is the biggest humanitarian problem we will potentially face in the world today. In my opinion, today the key element to making it move in the right direction is to achieve, as soon as possible, a peace agreement in Darfur. I do believe that all the efforts of the international community and all the pressures exerted by all countries that could and are willing to be involved in the situation should be focused now on that very clear and concrete objective. We should lose no more time in ensuring that there is a peace agreement for Darfur. Because the differences are so big among the various actors, unless there is a lot of concerted pressure and everybody acts together, there is a risk that a peace agreement may not be made. If the peace agreement is not made, I do believe that the situation may trigger much worse developments in the near future.

Now, a peace agreement is the beginning of a solution to the large and complex problem of re-engineering the society of Darfur. It will require a lot of reconciliation afterwards. Without that, it will be impossible to do it. I also believe that afterwards, unless it has an adequate mandate, a force which needs to be endowed with resources — and let us be honest in acknowledging that the African Union has not been provided with enough resources for the mission that it was supposed to accomplish — and with credibility as a deterrent — in the sense that those who violate the peace and the ceasefire agreements will understand that they risk severe punishment by that force — the risk of failure is very big.

In our opinion, a peace agreement is absolutely crucial. I think everybody should be involved and exert pressure if that is to be possible. Secondly, the

credibility of a force — independent of the decisions that this Council and other bodies will take on its leadership, composition and nature — will be absolutely crucial, as will a sustained effort to reconstruct a society that will require a lot of re-engineering, as I said.

The representative of the United Kingdom spoke about the civilian character of the camps. That is absolutely crucial and one of the biggest factors in humanitarian action. It is very difficult to ensure, because, as members know, we are not a State. We have no army and no police force. In many countries, we are effectively giving strong support to the local police force to enable it to do its job; in others, the situation is so difficult that we ourselves consider that the conditions no longer exist for us to act in those circumstances and that those camps should no longer be considered refugee camps. We have done that in Pakistan and are now in very strenuous discussions with our partners, for instance, on the situation in Makhmour Camp in Iraq.

As to the question of early warning, we have our own early warning and monitoring mechanisms. They are, of course, slim, but we have a very good dialogue with other United Nations agencies and I do believe that they can make a small but, hopefully, useful contribution to creating a more effective capacity to detect problems before they explode in today's world.

I should also like very much to thank the representative of Greece for his comments about the reform of the United Nations system and our role in that and about the need for effective cooperation in solving protracted refugee situations and for effective responsibility-sharing in order to make that possible.

The representative of Greece made a very relevant observation about repatriation and the need for conditions of security and development to be present if repatriation is to be successful. I would like to provide information on the results of different surveys we have conducted in several parts of the world. Contrary to my expectations, even more important than the solution of the security problem if repatriation is to be effectively triggered and successful, the main concern of refugees is related to livelihood conditions — to jobs, to development, to schools, to health care and to other conditions that will allow a dignified life. Unfortunately for us all, the insecurity problems are so big that the aforementioned considerations sometimes come second in the concerns of many refugees when they consider the prospect of going back home.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I wish to thank the Ambassador of Argentina for his very positive words on our work. I also wish to note our great interest in the recent decision taken by Argentina to become a host country in the context of shared responsibility in the resolution of refugee-related problems. Argentina played an important role in developing the Mexico Plan of Action, the framework agreement for Latin American cooperation in the support and protection of refugees and the resolution of their problems. I believe that the exemplary Mexico Plan of Action should be supported not only by us, but by the entire international community as well, especially in the resolution of certain acute displacement crises in Latin America, above all in Colombia.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to thank the representative of Slovakia for his comments and his interest in internally displaced persons and the efforts we are making. Effectively, there has been progress. We have established a global framework. We are now in the process of starting work in three pilot-project countries that have been selected: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Uganda. I do believe that — progressively, carefully and without ambitions that cannot be met by our own resources and capacities — we will be able gradually to respond to that very dramatic issue of today's world.

There has been effective progress in repatriation everywhere and, as the representative of Slovakia noted very accurately, Afghanistan is probably the most successful repatriation movement ever to have been supported by UNHCR.

The representative of Slovakia raised some concrete questions about the situation along the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. There are two main points of concern. One to which he referred specifically is in relation to the people in Kisoro, now numbering only 80,000. Many have already gone back, but they were living along the border without any real shelter. Today, we are building a small clinic and 10 large temporary shelters. We are introducing, together with the World Food Programme, a programme of high-protein food support for those

people. We consider that the solution, of course, is not to keep them in those circumstances and we have agreed with the Government of Uganda that the best place further inland — because refugees should not be kept on the border — is in Nakivale, where we already have 16,000 refugees and where preparations are being made for people who may want to go. A certain number — exactly 5,278 — have registered to go to Nakivale and we will now promote that movement in order to make sure that conditions are effectively provided for dignified support. Unfortunately, many others are still looking into the possibility of going back, and providing assistance to them in their current location is much more difficult, but we are doing our best.

Another place, in the Kanungu district, has a group of about 5,000 people which is more interested in going back to the Congo. A few hundred of them have agreed to be relocated, and we are once again preparing, with the Government of Uganda, a relocation programme. What I can guarantee is that as soon as it happens, we send people there and we start to determine, situation by situation and person by person, what the solution could be. Of course, this kind of thing is a nightmare for any organization, because it is erupting at every moment, here and there, and we are constantly needing to divert resources and people from one operation to the other to be able to give an effective answer to concerns such as the ones that have been expressed here.

I should like to express my deep gratitude to the representative of Japan and to say that I fully support his observations on burden-sharing and on the sustainability of voluntary return. I should like to pay tribute to the contribution of Japan and of Mrs. Ogata — my predecessor — in particular in support of the concept of human security, which is probably one of the richest concepts in terms of helping to bridge the gap between relief and development and to create conditions for sustainable return. I can assure the Council that cooperation with Ambassador Fujisaki is excellent and that we truly are working together very enthusiastically in order to enable UNHCR to be much more effective and relevant in the humanitarian community.

I should like to express my deep gratitude to the Ambassador of Denmark. Denmark has been extremely active in the humanitarian reform process and a very staunch and permanent supporter of UNHCR's activities all over the world. Let me answer her first question about the financial implications of internally displaced persons in a very candid way. I said at the beginning of the process that we wanted to be fully engaged, in a predictable way, with internal displacement all over the world, according to the framework that was established through the cluster approach, but that we considered that it would not make sense to divert resources from refugees to support internally displaced persons.

That is clearly our approach. But there is — and I am going to be very frank in this respect — a double accountability: the accountability of the agencies and the accountability of the donors. The donors must be very clear when they take decisions on where the money is going and on where it is coming from. We had the experience in Pakistan of funds diverted from operations in Africa to the operation in that country.

The problem is even bigger, because when we try to make sure that no resources are diverted from refugees to internal displacement situations, we cannot even ensure that, if we do not involve ourselves in internal displacement, the funds are guaranteed for refugees. Indeed, what happens in some circumstances — what has, in fact, happened in some circumstances — is that the money then goes from traditional refugee operations to other agencies involved with internally displaced persons in other circumstances. I believe, therefore, that there must be a very frank, open and transparent dialogue between agencies and donors to make sure that additionality is a reality. If that is not the case, we would be pretending that we are dealing with additionality, but, in fact, we would be undermining the needs of some to try to benefit others who are, of course, in a very dramatic situation.

Our financial prospects are difficult. We faced a very difficult exchange rate problem in 2005; that is a technical question I should like to move through. We are now making a very strong effort so that we are able to conduct our operations in 2006 with a minimum of negative impact on our operations, but it is also obvious from our side — the result of the meeting we had last week with representatives from all over the world — that we also need to reform ourselves very strongly in order to be able to deliver better and to be able to adapt better to today's realities.

Unfortunately, many agencies of many kinds — not only United Nations agencies — operate in circumstances that do not favour the best cost-benefit

analysis, as the Council is aware. We will do our best to address this problem in a very forceful way, because we really must ensure that funds that are scarce are fully used to meet the needs of those who require support. We must minimize as much as possible all of the other costs that international organizations as a whole tend to have.

I should like to express my deepest appreciation for Denmark's initiatives, namely in the area of development assistance to refugees, and in some very relevant programmes across the world, for instance in Uganda. In those operations, the idea of the sustainability of durable solutions is very much present.

I am confident about our enhanced cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, but, as I said earlier, the problem is a much bigger one. The problem, which is global if all the international community acts, is to establish the linkage between relief and development. To be honest, my assessment is that that linkage is not yet there yet and that the process does not really work sufficiently well in today's world.

The early recovery cluster will be very important, and the difficulties in that cluster are proof of that. I do not blame anyone for those difficulties. We face the same difficulties in our cluster. I wish only to stress that the problem goes beyond the creation of a cluster with a certain number of agencies. The problem is in the way that the international community addresses the situation.

(*spoke in French*)

I wish to thank the Ambassador of the Congo for his statement, particularly with respect to his concern for humanitarian workers. They suffer the consequences of lack of security with outstanding courage and determination. I see this in my colleagues themselves, I see this in other circumstances, other agencies, other countries, other institutions. It is one aspect that is very important to us.

I should like to note that the "Convention Plus" initiative is now mainstreamed in our work; it is no longer just a specific area for UNHCR's work but is present in all its aspects: in the development of our reintegration support capacity as one solution in the context of shared responsibility for the promotion of lasting solutions and in the area of development assistance, as a guarantee, within our limited sphere of activity, of the success of, inter alia, return operations and of specific initiatives on the ground, including the plan of action for Somalia, which endeavours to translate into specific actions the work done on irregular flows — one of the pillars of the "Convention Plus" idea.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the representative of the Russian Federation and to say that I will be visiting his country very soon. I look forward to the development of our cooperation. I would like mainly to stress his very relevant words about the reforms in our own Organization and his support for those reforms. I think they are quite in line with what I said to the Ambassador of Denmark: that we, too, need to reform ourselves to be able better to deliver. It is not only about asking for more money to do more things; it is about making sure that we are more cost-effective and more humanistic in our approaches to refugees and other persons of concern.

I should like to thank very much the Ambassador of Ghana. Ghana has had remarkable success in the way it has handled the crisis of refugees from Togo in the recent past, and we were very impressed with the quality of and the capacities for protection already in place in Ghana and with the effectiveness of the authorities of Ghana in that field. He posed a very relevant question: the credibility of the process of the determination of refugee status in the present context. I can assure him that this is one of the main concerns of my Office, and I thank him very much for his comments.

I would like also to thank very much the representative of the United States for his comments, especially for his support for our involvement in the area of internal displacement. It is indeed very important — and I would stress again what I said to the Permanent Representative of Denmark — that, acting together in a transparent way, donor countries — and the United States is the biggest donor country in support of the activities of UNHCR — and the agencies can effectively work to make sure that resources are not diverted. It is only through open dialogue about, and knowledge of, what each party is doing that we can guarantee that. That is a basic condition for the accountability that the United States so strongly supports.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would like to express my great appreciation for the comments made by the representative of Peru. As I have said, Mexico's plan of action, regarding which Peru has been one of the countries to show the greatest support and interest, is one of the groundbreaking areas in which UNHCR is active. For us, the appreciation for all the refugee work done in Latin America is extremely important. Latin America is a continent with a very significant asylum tradition. That tradition continues and is evolving, and we view it as very positive and as an example that we believe will be replicated throughout the world.

(*spoke in English*)

Finally, Mr. President, allow me to express to you my deep gratitude for your comments and for what was in fact a very comprehensive analysis of the problems we face. There is a very easy explanation for that: you, Sir, have been dealing with these problems yourself. Allow me to say that, when I look at you, I do not see the President of the Security Council; I see one of us. What I see is your contribution and that of your country, along with the knowledge you yourself bring and that gained from the extreme generosity with which your country has addressed these problems — sometimes in circumstances that are extremely difficult even for us to bear. You know better than I do how difficult it was for us and the World Food Programme, working together, to make sure that the nutritional situation in camps in Tanzania did not become completely unacceptable. As I said, it is a great honour to see you as one of us.

With regard to returns, all I can say is that this has always been a major concern for me. The decision I always take is not to interrupt support for returns, even in the absence of funding. We would go into the red to do so, assuming all the consequences of doing so. Because, if there is something noble in our work, it is to help people to go home. If there is something rewarding, it is to see the smiles of children and the determination of people, as well as the desire of the overwhelming majority of refugees to want to go home.

Let me end with this observation. There is an idea in the developed world that there are refugees everywhere whose main objective is to migrate to the developed world. In the complex population flows we are witnessing everywhere, it is true that that we have people in need of international protection; we have true refugees. But my experience is that the main concern of the millions of refugees in Afghanistan and the hundreds of thousands of refugees hosted in Tanzania is to go home. That was a surprise to me. We must ensure that voluntary repatriation is possible and that the conditions are met for returns to be sustainable. It is important that, when addressing the problems of refugees in the world, public opinion be fully aware that the main objective of the overwhelming majority of refugees throughout the world is to go home. We should all do our best to help them to go home.

For that, prevention is crucial. For that, a regional approach in dealing with crises is crucial. And for that, bridging the gap between relief and development is crucial. I believe the Council has a key role to play in making those three things work.

The President: I can assure you, Mr. Guterres, that after 11 years of my life working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, I shall continue to be one of you, and among the refugees and for the refugee cause.

I want to thank you very much, Mr. Guterres, for all the kind words you have addressed to my country, as well as to individual countries of the membership of the Council. More so, I want to thank you for the great confidence you have expressed to the Security Council in its past, present and future work, especially that related to refugees. I also want to thank you very much for the words of hope that you have conveyed from this Chamber to all the refugees and internally displaced persons around the world.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.